

Rain Barrel Winterization Guide

Thank you for taking steps to improve water quality in the Wabash River by purchasing and installing a rain barrel during 2012! We hope you enjoyed the rain barrel and the water that is stored and provided for you throughout the spring, summer and fall. Information contained below details how to winterize, clean and store your rain barrel. We recommend you follow these steps on or around the first frost annually or by approximately October 15th!



Step 1 - Drain your barrel.

Drain the rain barrel by opening the spigot.

Your full rain barrel presents a freezing hazard. Your 55-gallon rain barrel weighs almost 500 pound when full. If permitted to freeze, your drain spout could become clogged with ice and prevent drainage until it thaws. Your hoses could freeze causing splitting then release of the overflow water. Or even worse, your frozen barrel could crack from the pressure of expanding ice.

The good news: use this last bit of stored water for your plants or garden as possible.

Step 2 - Remove tubing from the diverter and downspout.

Holding the bottom of the downspout diverter, grasp the white, plastic nut on the tubing and gently unscrew it from the diverter. Leave the tubing attached to your rain barrel as you will reconnect the diverter and barrel in this same manner next spring!



Step 3 - Attach plug to the diverter.

Once the diverter tubing is disconnected, you will need to plug the outlet.

Use the original black cap removed from the rain barrel when the diverter was installed or borrow the black cap from the secondary overflow on the base of the barrel.

Screw this black cap onto the diverter

Store your rain barrel for the winter in an inside location or under outdoor stairs. If you wish to leave the barrel outside, remember that the barrel is very light when empty and that it should be weighted down before storing with the spigot open to prevent water accumulation.

Tips for cleaning your rain barrel

We recommend cleaning your barrel and all attachments at least once annually. Here are our recommendations:

Tubing: Tubing can be cleaned by soaking the tubing in warm, soapy water. Additionally, a strip of rag should be worked through the tubing to remove any accumulated debris, mold or mildew.

Barrel: Remove the lid and fill your rain barrel with water then add approximately 2 teaspoons of castile soap or vinegar per gallon of water (for a 55 gallon barrel you'll need 110 teaspoons or 3 1/3 cups). Use a nozzle sprayer attached to a garden hose to remove any material inside the barrel. After cleaning, be sure to fully drain the barrel and rinse it thoroughly before reattaching it to the downspout.

Diverter: Use a spray nozzle attached to a garden hose to spray out the diverter to remove any accumulated debris. To minimize debris in your diverter, be sure to regularly clean your gutters.

Lid Screen: Remove the lid and use a spray nozzle attached to a garden hose to clean accumulated material from your lid screen.

Algae growth

Algae growth in rain barrels is a result of three factors: organic debris, time and sunlight!

Organic Debris: Your diverter is great at removing leaves, sticks and seeds AND your screen removes these materials as well as fine sediment. However, the stored rain water will pick up organic matter as it washes off of your roof and through your gutters. This organic matter nourishes algae. The removal of organic matter will help prevent algae growth and the key is keeping your gutters clean!

Time: The longer your barrel sits holding water, the more algae has a chance to grow. If rain is in the forecast, consider emptying your barrel to make room for fresh water.

Sunlight: Direct sun on your barrel gives algae the energy it needs to grow. Shading the barrel is a great way to inhibit algae growth. You can do this by screening your barrel, planting a climbing plant nearby, or placing it in the shade.

Keep in touch!

If you have questions, or if you would like additional information about:

- Daisy chaining barrels (i.e., installing multiple barrels at a single downspout),
- Rain gardens, bio swales, native plantings, and more,

contact Sara Peel at the Wabash River Enhancement Corporation, speel@wabashriver.net, or (765) 337-9100. You can also visit www.tippeconow.com for additional information on this and other projects in your area.



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